

# CONSTITUTION AIMS AND PRINCIPLES INDUSTRIAL STRATEGY & COMMUNITY STRATEGY



# SOLIDARITY FEDERATION



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# CONTENTS

<b>AIMS AND PRINCIPLES</b>	<b>3</b>
<b>CONSTITUTION</b>	
<b>Affiliation</b>	
<b>A) Conditions of affiliation</b>	<b>4</b>
<b>B) The Aims of the Solidarity Federation</b>	
<b>C) The Principles of Revolutionary Unionism</b>	<b>5</b>
<b>D) Subscriptions</b>	<b>7</b>
<b>Rights and duties</b>	
<b>A) The status of members</b>	<b>7</b>
<b>B) Locals</b>	<b>8</b>
<b>C) Industrial Networks</b>	
<b>D) Isolated members</b>	<b>9</b>
<b>Making decisions</b>	
<b>A) Federal Conference</b>	<b>9</b>
<b>B) Delegates</b>	<b>10</b>
<b>C) Minutes</b>	<b>11</b>
<b>D) IWA Congress</b>	
<b>Federal mandates</b>	
<b>A) Federal Officers</b>	<b>12</b>
<b>B) International Secretariat</b>	<b>13</b>
<b>C) Vice-Officers</b>	<b>14</b>
<b>Making decisions</b>	
<b>A) Handbook</b>	<b>14</b>
<b>B) Federal Propaganda</b>	<b>15</b>
<b>C) Catalyst</b>	
<b>D) Direct Action</b>	
<b>E) Website</b>	
<b>Publications</b>	
<b>A) Internal Bulletin</b>	<b>15</b>
<b>B) SF Calendar</b>	<b>16</b>
<b>C) Informal channels</b>	
<b>INDUSTRIAL STRATEGY</b>	<b>18</b>
<b>COMMUNITY STRATEGY</b>	<b>22</b>

Cover illustration taken from *Annals of the Great Strikes in the United States, regarding the upheavals of 1877.*

# **AIMS & PRINCIPLES**

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The Solidarity Federation is a revolutionary union initiative: a working class organisation which seeks the abolition of capitalism and the state. Capitalism because it exploits, oppresses and kills working people and wrecks the environment for profit worldwide.

The state because it can only maintain hierarchy and privilege for the classes who control it and their servants; it cannot be used to fight the oppression and exploitation that are the consequences of hierarchy and the source of privilege. In their place we want a society based on workers' self-management, solidarity, mutual aid and libertarian communism.

That society can only be achieved by working class organisations based on the same principles – revolutionary unions. These are not Trades Unions only concerned with “bread and butter” issues like pay and conditions. Revolutionary unions are means for working people to organise and fight all the issues – both in the workplace and outside – which arise from our oppression.

We recognise that not all oppression is economic, but can be based on gender, race, sexuality, or anything our rulers find useful.

Therefore, revolutionary unions fully support and encourage organisation in all spheres of life that consciously parallel those of the society we wish to create; that is, organisation based on mutual aid, voluntary cooperation, direct democracy, and opposed to domination and exploitation in all forms.

We are committed to building a new society within the shell of the old in both our workplaces and the wider community. Unless we organise in this way, politicians – some claiming to be revolutionary – will be able to exploit us for their own ends.

The Solidarity Federation consists of Locals which support the formation of future revolutionary unions and are centres for working class struggle on a local level. Our activities are based on Direct Action – action by workers ourselves, not through intermediaries like politicians and union officials; our decisions are made through participation of the membership.

We welcome all working people who agree with our Aims and Principles, and who will spread propaganda for social revolution and revolutionary unions.

We recognise that the class struggle is worldwide, and are affiliated to the International Workers' Association, whose Principles of Revolutionary Unionism we have adopted.

# **THE CONSTITUTION**

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## **SECTION 1: Affiliation**

### **A) Conditions of affiliation**

Affiliation to the Solidarity Federation is conditional on agreement to abide by the Aims, Principles and Constitution, and on the payment of all applicable subscriptions.

Certain workers have roles and interests that are incompatible with the aims and principles of anarcho-syndicalism and are barred from membership. These include:

- Police and prison officers
- Those who have the power to restrain or imprison in detention centres of all varieties
- Bailiffs
- Full-time trade union officials (see Appendix),
- Officers or holders of executive positions in political parties
- Scabs
- Those who have ultimate power to hire and fire or those whose primary role in the workplace is to hire and fire.

### **B) The Aims of the Solidarity Federation**

The Solidarity Federation is a revolutionary union initiative: a working class organisation which seeks the abolition of capitalism and the state.

Capitalism because it exploits, oppresses and kills working people and wrecks the environment for profit worldwide. The state because it can only maintain hierarchy and privilege for the classes who control it and their servants; it cannot be used to fight the oppression and exploitation that are the consequences of hierarchy and the source of privilege. In their place we want a society based on workers' self-management, solidarity, mutual aid and libertarian communism.

That society can only be achieved by working class organisations based on the same principles — revolutionary unions. These are not Trades Unions only concerned with "bread and butter" issues like pay and conditions. Revolutionary unions are means for working people to organise and fight all the issues — both in the workplace and outside — which arise from our oppression. We recognise that not all oppression is economic, but can be based on gender, race, sexuality, or anything our rulers find useful. Therefore, revolutionary unions fully support and encourage organisation in all spheres of life that consciously parallel those of the society we wish to create; that is, organisation based on mutual aid, voluntary cooperation, direct democracy, and opposed to domination and exploitation in all forms.

We are committed to building a new society within the shell of the old in both our workplaces and the wider community. Unless we organise in this way, politicians — some claiming to be revolutionary — will be able to exploit us for their own ends.

The Solidarity Federation consists of Locals and Industrial Networks which support

the formation of future revolutionary unions and are centres for working class struggle on a local level. Our activities are based on Direct Action — action by workers ourselves, not through intermediaries like politicians and union officials; our decisions are made through participation of the membership.

We welcome all working people who agree with our Aims and Principles, and who will spread propaganda for social revolution and revolutionary unions. We recognise that the class struggle is worldwide, and are affiliated to the International Workers' Association, whose Principles of Revolutionary Unionism we have adopted.

### **C) The Principles of Revolutionary Unionism**

**i)** Revolutionary unionism, basing itself on the class struggle, aims to unite all workers in combative economic organisations that fight to free themselves from the double yoke of capital and the State. Its goal is the reorganisation of social life on the basis of Libertarian Communism via the revolutionary action of the working class. Since only the economic organisations of the proletariat are capable of achieving this objective, revolutionary unionism addresses itself to workers in their capacity as producers, creators of social wealth, to take root and develop amongst them, in opposition to the modern workers' parties, which it declares are incapable of the economic reorganisation of society.

**ii)** Revolutionary unionism is the staunch enemy of all social and economic monopoly, and aims at its abolition by the establishment of economic communities and administrative organs run by the workers in the field and factories, forming a system of free councils without subordination to any authority or political party, bar none. As an alternative to the politics of State and parties, revolutionary unionism posits the economic reorganisation of production, replacing the rule of man over man with the administrative management of things. Consequently, the goal of revolutionary unionism is not the conquest of political power, but the abolition of all state functions in the life of society. Revolutionary unionism considers that along with the disappearance of the monopoly of property, must come the disappearance of the monopoly of domination; and that no form of State, however camouflaged, can ever be an instrument for human liberation, but that on the contrary, it will always be the creator of new monopolies and new privileges.

**iii)** Revolutionary unionism has a two-fold function: to carry on the day-to-day revolutionary struggle for the economic, social and intellectual advancement of the working class within the limits of present-day society, and to educate the masses so that they will be ready to independently manage the processes of production and distribution when the time comes to take possession of all the elements of social life. Revolutionary unionism does not accept the idea that the organisation of a social system based exclusively on the producing class can be ordered by simple governmental decrees and maintains that it can only be obtained through the common action of all manual and intellectual workers, in every branch of industry, by self-management of the workers, such that every group, factory or branch of industry is an autonomous member of the greater economic organism and systematically runs the production and distribution processes according to the interests of the

community, on an agreed upon plan and on the basis of mutual accord.

**iv)** Revolutionary unionism is opposed to all organisational tendencies inspired by the centralism of State and Church, because these can only serve to prolong the survival of the State and authority and to systematically stifle the spirit of initiative and the independence of thought. Centralism is an artificial organisation that subjects the so-called lower classes to those who claim to be superior, and that leaves in the hands of the few the affairs of the whole community — the individual being turned into a robot with controlled gestures and movements. In the centralised organisation, society's good is subordinated to the interests of the few, variety is replaced by uniformity and personal responsibility is replaced by rigid discipline. Consequently, revolutionary unionism bases its social vision on a broad federalist organisation; i.e., an organisation organised from the bottom up, the uniting of all forces in the defence of common ideas and interests.

**v)** Revolutionary unionism rejects all parliamentary activity and all collaboration with legislative bodies; because it knows that even the freest voting system cannot bring about the disappearance of the clear contradictions at the core of present-day society and because the parliamentary system has only one goal: to lend a pretence of legitimacy to the reign of falsehood and social injustice.

**vi)** Revolutionary Unionism rejects all political and national frontiers, which are arbitrarily created, and declares that so-called nationalism is just the religion of the modern state, behind which is concealed the material interests of the propertied classes. Revolutionary unionism recognises only economic differences, whether regional or national, that produce hierarchies, privileges and every kind of oppressions (because of race, sex and any false or real difference), and in the spirit of solidarity claims the right to self-determination for all economic groups.

**vii)** For the identical reason, revolutionary unionism fights against militarism and war. Revolutionary unionism advocates anti-war propaganda and the replacement of standing armies, which are only the instruments of counter-revolution at the service of the capitalism, by workers' militias, which, during the revolution, will be controlled by the workers' unions; it demands, as well, the boycott and embargo of all raw materials and products necessary to war, with the exception of a country where the workers are in the midst of social revolution, in which case we should help them defend the revolution. Finally, revolutionary unionism advocates the preventive and revolutionary general strike as a means of opposing war and militarism.

**viii)** Revolutionary unionism recognises the need of a production that does not damage the environment, and that tries to minimise the use of non-renewable resources and uses, whenever possible, renewable alternatives. It does not admit the ignorance as the origin of the present-day environmental crisis, but the thirst for earnings. Capitalist production always seeks to minimise the costs in order to get more earnings to survive, and it is unable to protect the environment. To sum up, the world debt crisis has speeded up the tendency to commercial harvest to the detriment of the subsistence agriculture. This fact has produced the destruction of the tropical forest, starvation and disease. The fight for saving our planet and the fight for destroying capitalism must be joint or both of them will fail.

**ix)** Revolutionary unionism asserts itself to be a supporter of the method of direct action, and aids and encourages all struggles that are not in contradiction to its own goals. Its methods of struggle include strikes, boycotts, sabotage, etc. Direct action reaches its deepest expression in the general strike, which should also be, from the point of view of revolutionary unionism, the prelude to the social revolution.

**x)** While revolutionary unionism is opposed to all organised violence regardless of the kind of government, it realises that there will be extremely violent clashes during the decisive struggles between the capitalism of today and the free communism of tomorrow. Consequently, it recognises as valid that violence may be used as a means of defence against the violent methods used by the ruling classes during the struggles that lead up to the revolutionary populace expropriating the lands and means of production. As this expropriation can only be carried out and bought to a successful conclusion by the direct intervention of the workers' revolutionary economic organisations, defence of the revolution must also be the task of these economic organisations and not of a military or quasi-military body developing independently of them.

**xi)** Only in the economic and revolutionary organisations of the working class are there forces capable of bringing about its liberation and the necessary creative energy for the reorganisation of society on the basis of libertarian communism.

## **D) Subscriptions**

Subscriptions are payable monthly to the Local to which a member is affiliated. Rates are set by Locals, which pay £3 per month per member to the Solidarity Federation as an affiliation fee, including an amount for IWA affiliation.

# **SECTION 2: Rights and duties**

## **A) The status of members**

All members have the right to:

- Free expression of their ideas
- Have their physical and moral integrity respected
- Attend all events organised by the Solidarity Federation
- Have full access to information about all Solidarity Federation decisions and activities
- Remain in disagreement with decisions and activities of the Solidarity Federation, so long as they abide by the Aims, Principles and Constitution.

All members have the duty to:

- Participate in, defend and support the Solidarity Federation, the International Workers' Association, their Aims, Principles, Statutes and affiliates to the fullest extent of their ability
- Follow and discuss fully issues facing the Solidarity Federation and the IWA in their Networks and Locals, and using the Internal Bulletin (IB)

- Sell and contribute to Catalyst, Direct Action and other SF publications to the best of their ability, and pass on donations and sales to the Media Collective
- Adhere to the conditions of affiliation.

All affiliates are accountable to the Solidarity Federation for their actions as individuals. This applies to members of Locals and Networks affiliated to the Solidarity Federation. Clear, deliberate, consistent or repeated breaches of the conditions of affiliation may lead to disaffiliation. If any three or more SF members wish to form a new Local, the following three-step procedure applies.

First, the prospective Local should publicise details about the potential group in the IB, including how many members and prospective members it has, where they are based, and the industries they're employed in (or if they're students, unemployed, or retired).

Second, once this has been done, they may request to be added to the website as a "Local in formation".

Finally, in order to become formally accepted as a new Local, they should submit a report on their activities and plans to the IB. They can then apply to be accepted at Federal Conference (the activity report can be included with the application).

## **B) Locals**

A Local is formed whenever there are three or more members in a defined geographical area, who should meet at least once a month. A new Local must be accepted at Federal Conference. This will occur at the start of conference, allowing new locals a full vote if accepted.

All disputes between members in the area (including two "rival" Locals), will be resolved by Federal Conference agreement can not be reached locally. Locals must fulfil their obligations under Section 2a), but otherwise are expected to use their own initiative in pursuing their activities. However, where there is clear evidence of propaganda or practices contrary to the Aims, Principles and Constitution, this may lead to disaffiliation.

Locals must elect their own Secretary and Treasurer, who should be mandated, accountable and subject to limited tenure of office on the same basis as Federal Officers. The Secretary is responsible for providing reports at least quarterly, written credentials and mandates to the Solidarity Federation. The Treasurer is responsible for paying subs to the Solidarity Federation, providing a quarterly list of members and issuing and updating Membership Cards to all members of the Local.

## **C) Industrial Networks**

Networks group together members of the Solidarity Federation who work in the same Industry. Networks must have at least three members. All Network members must also be members of a Local.

Networks must be accepted by Federal Conference. Because of geographical spread, national meetings may be infrequent, but must be convened at least twice each year, to fit in with the internal democracy of the Solidarity Federation. Network propaganda

may be supported by Solidarity Federation funds, according to the mandate of the National Treasurer. Network propaganda and activities must not be contrary to the Aims, Principles and Constitution.

There are three general networks covering public sector, private sector and unwaged. Anyone not in another network is automatically a member of the one that fits their situation. These general networks mandate a person from each sector to act as co-ordinator for their particular network. Members who do not exactly fit one of these general networks, or their situation applies to more than one (eg, Third Sector workers or vocational students) should choose the network which best matches their situation.

#### **D) Isolated members**

All SF members exercise their voting rights through their nearest Local. That Local must also ensure that all such members receive the Internal Bulletin and other relevant publications and is kept informed of SF activities throughout the year. At a minimum, the Local's Secretary must ensure that they are involved in decision-making processes, and the Local's Treasurer must collect their subs.

In addition, the Local should make specific efforts to support those members who can not regularly attend meetings due to their distance from its area; by organising meetings and actions to suit them, and also by planning activities which will assist them to take steps to form their own Local, as far as possible.

The Federal Secretary is to be informed by each local about their isolated members with a view to instigating the formation of new locals when there is a sufficient density of individual members in a given area.

## **SECTION 3: Making decisions**

#### **A) Federal Conference**

Federal decisions are made at the twice yearly Federal Conference. The function of Conference is to facilitate the work of the Federation, and to share ideas and tactics, not to impose policies on Networks and Locals, which are autonomous, although they must abide by Conference decisions.

Conference decides mandates for those commissioned by the Solidarity Federation to carry out duties on its behalf between Conferences, and elects Locals to carry them out. It also decides matters of principle and of a constitutional nature, including issues of affiliation, such as new Locals or Networks, and affiliated groups in arrears with their subs. Federal matters to be decided at Conference include:

- Questions of affiliation, and disputes between affiliated groups
- Receiving the reports of, mandating and electing Federal Secretary, Federal Treasurer, Direct Action Collective, etc.
- Organisational and constitutional issues
- International business, including receiving the report of, mandating and electing the International Secretariat and delegates to the IWA Congress

- Discussion of international issues
- Discussion and debate about issues facing the Solidarity Federation and its strategy
- Allegations of propaganda and practices contrary to the Aims, Principles and Constitution, and to the Principles, Aims and Statutes of the IWA.

Federal Conference decisions can only be changed by another Federal Conference.

All proposals for Federal Conference must be sent to the Internal Bulletin three months in advance (the third IB before conference); all amendments must be sent to the Internal Bulletin two months in advance. It is the responsibility of Locals or Networks making proposals to circulate all relevant papers, documents, etc. two months in advance via the Internal Bulletin. It is the responsibility of Locals to fully discuss the issues and to properly mandate their delegates. It is the responsibility of the Federal Secretary to facilitate this process by highlighting issues which need resolution in their report to all federal meetings, and to publicise the deadline for Conference proposals.

Discussion of current issues should take place all year round, to ensure the drafting and discussion of proposals on which delegates can be properly mandated.

Decisions should be made by seeking consensus in the first instance. However, where a vote needs to be taken a two-thirds majority is required for a motion or amendment to be carried. Abstentions are not counted. Voting is on the basis of one Local, one vote, but only Locals present at Conference can vote.

Where the wording of resolutions needs to be amended at conference, unless an amendment is accepted by the proponents and notified to all Locals at least one month in advance of Conference, a delegate from each of the interested Locals will form a Conference Commission which will draft a final version. This draft will be circulated to the delegates of all Locals in time to be decided as the first item on the agenda of the final session of Conference. All constitutional proposals must detail, in the motion, the wording that they propose to change or add in to the Constitution.

Federal Secretary should arrange for a confirmed conference date within three months of the expected conference date, to ensure the timetable for the submission of locals can be adhered to. Where there is an urgent issue which requires a decision, an Emergency Federal Conference, on that issue only, may be called by a minimum of three Locals and/or Networks. All relevant papers and documents must be supplied to the Federal Secretary with the request.

Where a Local considers that its delegates have acted in breach of their mandates, they must inform the Federal Secretary within three months, and include details of the mandate. Where such actions have affected the outcome of a decision, the Federal Secretary must convene an Emergency Federal Conference on that issue.

The Federal Secretary will then immediately arrange the meeting and give two months notice via the Internal Bulletin. It is permissible to hold an Emergency Conference, on the same basis as the International Conference.

## **B) Delegates**

Only delegates and those with Federal Mandates, as appropriate, should speak at Federal Conference, with the exception of Discussions which do not require a vote by

delegates; or where an individual is required to contribute to a debate (e.g. to account for their conduct). While different individuals may be delegated to speak by their mandating body, they must speak as delegates of that body and not express individual opinions, except as indicated above.

All delegates must be named by their mandating body, and should have written credentials and mandates. Delegates must adhere to their mandate and submit a written report detailing how they carried out their mandate, and points of immediate interest, to the next meeting of their mandating body. A Local should send up to three delegates to Federal Conference, and may have an unlimited number of observers.

No individual should be mandated by more than one body (e.g. a Local and a Network). Credentials will be established by the Federal Treasurer, as will voting rights. Delegates from any Local in arrears with subs may speak and vote with the agreement of Conference. However, the onus is on the Local to demonstrate that it has genuinely made every effort to pay its subs. Requests for this must be included, with reasons, in a Local's report for Conference in the pre-Conference Internal Bulletin.

## **C) Minutes**

The Federal Secretary is responsible for the taking and circulation of minutes of Federal Conference. During each session of Conference, minutes will be taken by a named individual. The Federal Secretary will keep a record of which session's minutes were taken by which individual.

Minutes must be an accurate record of any decisions taken, resolutions passed and mandates given. It is the responsibility of the Chair to clarify decisions, and to ensure that the meeting and the minute-taker understand the agreement reached. The minutes must also summarise accurately the main points of debate, but should not be a verbatim record. Record of Discussions should be fuller, and reflect all viewpoints expressed. Minutes will be circulated as a supplement with the Internal Bulletin within two months. All minutes of federal meetings must include as standard: The agenda of the meeting broken down by session; The date, period and number of each session of the meeting and attendance; A record of chair and minute-taker for each session; An accurate record of mandates given; The final text of any resolutions carried alongside the record of debate and voting; A full record of discussions.

## **D) IWA Congress**

Conference also mandates and elects up to six delegates to the IWA Congress. One of these delegates should have attended the previous IWA Congress, and one should have attended the previous IWA Plenary, where possible. One delegate will also attend the next IWA Plenary, where possible.

Two delegates should attend the full session of the Congress at all times, where possible, others may be needed to participate in Commissions at Congress. Where proposals have been put forward by the Solidarity Federation, one delegate should be assigned to lead on the proposal.

The delegation should act collectively, rotating attendance at sessions where possible. The delegation will submit a report to the next Solidarity Federation Conference.

Delegates are accountable to the Solidarity Federation for their behaviour, and must adhere to their mandate.

## Section 4: Federal mandates

### A) Federal Officers

Federal Conference will give mandates to Locals to carry out the administration of the Solidarity Federation, and to handle its external relations. The Local will name an individual who will be responsible for ensuring the tasks mandated are carried out. The Local will then support this individual, and name another if they should be unable to continue between Conferences. Mandates are given for a two year period, and will be reviewed fully at Conference. Failure to carry out, or breaches of, a mandate will lead to recall of the mandate by Federal Conference. If a Federal Officer's conduct has been challenged by any other member, Local or Network, or in the case of the International Secretary another Section of the IWA, they may seek the backing of Federal Conference through a vote of confidence. This should be included in their report.

The Federal Officers are:

#### i) The Federal Secretary

The Federal Secretary is responsible for organising Federal Conference and any extraordinary federal events. This includes securing appropriate venues, giving six months' notice and publicising deadlines for proposals and agenda items. The dates and venue of Conference must be confirmed three months in advance; the agenda and proposals must be circulated to Locals and Networks two months in advance; reports, amendments and all relevant papers and documents must be circulated one month in advance. Responsibility for organising Federal Conference may be delegated to a named Local, but overall responsibility for making sure it happens remains with the Federal Secretary.

The Federal Secretary is also responsible for compiling and circulating the Internal Bulletin on the 1st day of each month, but may commission a named individual to carry it out. The Federal Secretary will update, compile and circulate the Member's Handbook.

The Federal Secretary is responsible for updating the Constitution, and publishing it, but may delegate this to a named individual.

#### ii) The Communications Delegate

The Communications Delegate is responsible for dealing with membership enquiries and external contacts, as well as communicating with relevant and sympathetic organisations, in the geographical area which the Solidarity Federation covers, when necessary. This will involve requesting that the Publicity Commission circulates relevant materials as required. Ideally membership enquiries should be dealt with within 24 hours and forwarded to the relevant Local. The Communications Delegate should also make use of websites, forums and social networking to publicise Solidarity Federation events and publications as appropriate, in addition to dealing with contacts and requests from the media, both mainstream and radical, in line with Solidarity Federation policy.

### **iii) The Federal Treasurer**

The Federal Treasurer is responsible for collecting and accounting for all subscriptions, donations, credit notes and pledges. This includes opening and administering a bank account, and circulating payment details to all members. The Federal Treasurer will produce a financial report each quarter, including a breakdown of subscriptions paid, and arrears. This information will be used to maintain membership records, and to issue membership cards annually, and as appropriate.

The Federal Treasurer will correspond with Locals, Networks and members in arrears about their payments and membership situation. The Federal Treasurer will pay dues to the IWA quarterly, at the rate of \$3 per member, and subsidise DA £100 per issue, reimburse DA for copies sent to enquirers at £1.50 per copy, and buy 30 copies of each DA for use by the External Relations Secretary. The Federal Treasurer will make payments as mandated at Federal Conference.

### **iv) The Federal Training Co-ordinator**

The Federal Training Co-ordinator's role is to co-ordinate and develop a national syllabus of training on different topics useful to anarcho-syndicalist militants. The workshops are available to all members via the request of their Local or Network.

### **v) The Women's Officer**

The role of the Women's Officer is to act as a point of contact for women within SolFed. This will include to act as a point of contact should a woman feel the culture of her local is disadvantaging her because of her gender. In these cases the Federal Women's Officer will then arrange support from women in another local.

The Women's officer helps ensure a buddy system is available for women members to support each other — pairing each female member with another to provide mutual support (inside the local where possible, with a member from another local when appropriate). The Women's Officer will liaise with the Federal Training Officers to ensure training that promotes gender equality is available to all members.

The Women's Officer will act as liaison with other feminist and women's groups where appropriate.

## **B) International Secretariat**

The International Secretariat is responsible for all international relations. Federal Conference will mandate a Local to carry out these duties for two years, to be reviewed at Federal Conference. The International Secretary will be a named individual, as will any other officers the mandated Local determines should take on specified tasks under the mandate.

The International Secretary is responsible for: Maintaining contact with the IWA General Secretariat, and circulating all documents and minutes to the membership; Providing a written report, credentials and mandates for delegates to IWA Congress and Plenaries; Ensuring delegates attend IWA meetings, carry out their mandates and write reports; Sending proposals, agenda items and documents for circulation for IWA Congress to the General Secretariat six months in advance; Sending agenda items and documents for circulation for IWA Plenaries to the General Secretariat three months in advance; Organising an SF International Conference as required, to mandate delegates

to the IWA Plenary, based on the agenda and documents for the latter, which will be circulated two months in advance;

Translation of all documents to and from Spanish and English as appropriate; Translation to and from other languages as appropriate; Collection and payment of the annual affiliation subscriptions to the IWA General Secretariat; Accounting for and arranging payment of travel and publishing expenses incurred on international business. To circulate an activity report to the IWA at least twice-yearly.

## **C) Vice-Officers**

Federal Conference will give mandates to Locals, other than the Local mandated for the primary post, for vice roles within the federal organisation.

The vice-officer's role is one of preparedness, the primary officers role is to keep the vice officer abreast of current situations, functions, computer log-in details and any relevant developments.

The vice role is one of support and cover. Or should a recall or permanent breakdown in the correct functioning of the primary officer role occur, as a temporary stand-in until a replacement is elected at the next Federal Conference.

The Local will name an individual who will be responsible for ensuring the tasks mandated are carried out. The Local will then support this individual, and name another if they should be unable to continue between Conferences. Mandates are given for a two year period, and will be reviewed fully at Conference.

Failure to carry out, or breaches of, a mandate will lead to recall of the mandate by Federal Conference.

If a vice-officer's conduct has been challenged by any other member, Local or Network, or in the case of the International Secretary another Section of the IWA, they may seek the backing of Federal Conference through a vote of confidence. This should be included in their report.

Vice officer mandates cover the officer roles of:

- i)** Federal Secretary
- ii)** Federal Treasurer
- iii)** Women's Officer
- iv)** External Relations Officer
- v)** Federal Training Coordinator
- vi)** International Secretary

## **SECTION 5: Publications**

### **A) Handbook**

The Federal Secretary is responsible for compiling and updating a Handbook, and for circulating it to all new members.

The Handbook will include the following information for members: The Aims, Principles and Constitution; Details of how the SF is organised; Ideas on how to get a Local set up.

## **B) Approval of Federal Propaganda**

Locals are free to produce material which is in line with Solidarity Federation's politics and positions; all such material is to be circulated to all locals, e.g. via the internal bulletin; conflicts and disagreements about material produced in other Locals could be taken to Federal Conference. This model works on the "trust first, deal with exceptions later" model. The Publicity Commission (elected at Federal Conference as one local for a 2 year term) is responsible both for the production of federal propaganda and for the adapting of local propaganda for use nationally.

## **C) Catalyst**

Federal Conference will mandate and elect a Local to be responsible for editing and publishing Catalyst as one of the federal organs of the Solidarity Federation. The format and frequency of publication will be determined by the mandate given at Federal Conference.

The mandated Local will be accountable and will elect named individuals to carry out this mandate, and for the publication and contents of these publications, to Federal Conference. The mandated Local has the ability to co-opt members of other Locals to assist in this work. The mandated Local will present a report to Federal Conference and Federal Delegate Councils.

## **D) Direct Action**

Federal Conference will mandate and elect a Local to be responsible for editing and publishing Direct Action as one of the federal organs of the Solidarity Federation. The format and frequency will be determined by the mandate given by Federal Conference.

The mandated Local will be accountable and will elect named individuals to carry out this mandate, and for the publication and contents of these publications, to Federal Conference and Federal Delegate Councils. The mandated Local has the ability to co-opt members of other Locals to assist in this work. The mandated Local will present a report to Federal Conference and Federal Delegate Conference.

## **E) Solidarity Federation Website**

Federal Conference will mandate and elect a Local to be responsible for maintaining and publishing the Solidarity Federation web pages, including internal pages.

The mandated Local will be accountable and will elect named individuals to carry out this mandate, and for the publication and contents of these publications, to Federal Conference and Federal Delegate Councils. The mandated Local has the ability to co-opt members of other Locals to assist in this work. The mandated Local will present a report to Federal Conference and Federal Delegate Conference.

# **SECTION 6: Internal Communications**

## **A) Internal Bulletin (IB)**

The Federal Secretary will be responsible for compiling and circulating the Internal Bulletin each month.

All discussion and debate contributions to the Internal Bulletin must be passed on by

their Local or Network. Opinions of individuals, Networks or Locals may be expressed, but if the opinion is not that of the Local or Network this must be specified.

There is a limit of three individual submissions per month with a word limit of 200 words for each. To facilitate discussion, submissions may be made via the website and be visible to members immediately, whilst also being compiled into the monthly IB.

The structure of the IB should include the following sections:

- A contents index with page numbers;
- Reports from locals, networks, national officers, collectives;
- Conference agendas and minutes;
- Discussion documents from locals, networks, national officers, collectives;
- Discussion contributions from individual members;
- International notices and reports; Notices and calls, and Any other business;
- Calendar with events and deadlines;
- List of contact points (mandated officers, collectives, local secretaries...).

All contributions must list the contributor, date, which Local, Network or individual it has been submitted by, and all those to whom it has been sent at the top. If no submissions are received for a given section, the section should simply read [no submissions], serving as a placeholder and reminder to members that the IB is the right place to look for such information.

### **B) SF Calendar**

The SF website includes a calendar of public and internal events. Federal events (including deadlines for conference submissions) should be submitted to the website by the Federal Secretary (but may be delegated), while other events will be added by locals and networks. The Media Collective will add submission deadlines and publication dates for our publications. The upcoming events from the calendar will be included in the IB.

### **C) Informal channels of communication**

SF members communicate amongst themselves by a number of informal means. Participation in these is optional, voluntary, informal, and has no relevance for decision making. Members have full rights of free association and discussion, but any matters arising requiring decision making or effecting the federation or its parts should go through the formal channels (Locals, Networks and the IB). SF provides the following informal channels for its members to peruse:

- i) The federal discussion email list. All members may post, and all subscribers receive all messages to the list.
- ii) The internal forums. All SF members are entitled to a login for the national website, which amongst other things grants access to the internal forums. Locals, Networks and Collectives/Commissions may choose to have their own forums if they wish.
- iii) The federal announce-list. Only mandated officers of the federation or Locals and Industrial Networks may post to this list. It is intended to facilitate urgent announcements and appeals for solidarity.



## APPENDIX

We define a full time trade union official as one who is employed by the union and accountable to the union bureaucracy rather than the rank and file. In addition we would include anyone who has the ability within the union structure to control access to resources and backing.

This does not include workers on facility time, especially where they are recallable by the union members. Any union position attracting facility time may well have its own problems, but these should be examined on a case by case basis, should someone wish to join.

# INDUSTRIAL STRATEGY

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## Preamble

As a revolutionary union initiative, the Solidarity Federation seeks to develop into a revolutionary union (anarcho-syndicalist union). We see this as an essential forerunner to such a society.

To this end, SF seeks to create a culture of militant opposition to the bosses and the state, controlled by the workers involved.

This means picking fights and winning victories, however small, in order to build confidence and a culture of militancy and solidarity which can take on bigger fights.

This strategy can apply equally where workers organise independently of the union bureaucracy within the official trade unions and where it is appropriate to set up organisation independent of trade union control

## GENERAL PRINCIPLES

### **Rank and file control**

Decisions should be made collectively. This means they are made by mass meetings and workers on the job, not by officials in union offices.

These mass meetings should ideally include all those in the workplace, regardless of union membership.

It will not, however, include scabs or management.

Anyone we elect to negotiate with management should have a mandate from the workforce that gives them clear guidance on what is and is not acceptable. Mass meetings of workers must be able to recall all delegates.

A meeting of delegates drawn from mass meetings, to co-ordinate different departments or work sites for example, constitutes a delegate council.

### **Direct action**

Direct action at work means tactics such as strikes, go-slows, working-to-rule, occupations and boycotts.

We are opposed to the alternative which is ‘partnership’ with bosses and sham ‘consultations’.

Workers can only win serious concessions from management when direct industrial action is used or when bosses fear it might be.

Where we are not strong enough to place major demands on our bosses, we still seek to collectivise grievances and use appropriate direct action to resolve everyday problems.

## **Solidarity**

Solidarity with other workers is the key to victory — workers should support each others' disputes regardless of any anti-strike laws. We need to approach other workers directly for their support, and where possible attempt to extend our struggles beyond all artificial boundaries. We seek to rebuild a culture where all workers know a picket line is not to be crossed.

## **Publicity**

Victimisation, sacking and blacklisting are real risks for union activists, even from established unions. As a rule of thumb, a Solidarity Federation workplace presence will not publically announce itself until either organising efforts cannot be advanced without doing so, or members are confident they have the organisational strength and solidarity of their colleagues to resist attempts at victimisation.

## **Control of funds**

Strike funds need to be controlled by the strikers themselves. Trade union officials will refuse to fund unlawful solidarity action and use access to resources to keep control of the struggle from the workers involved. Union bureaucrats are able to use the promise of official backing and strike pay to turn action on and off like a tap.

## **Social change**

The interests of the working class lie in the abolition of capitalist society. The whole of the wealth of society is produced by the workers. However, a surplus is extracted from our labour which funds the ruling class of shareholders and business people and their state.

When workers make wage demands, they are simply trying to win a bigger share of what is rightfully their own: everything. This struggle requires much more than economic wage demands. It is also a power struggle for control of the workplace. We unite the political and the economic because it reflects the realities under capitalism.

The working class is at one and the same time oppressed and exploited. If we are ever to be truly free, workers must challenge both capitalist exploitation and the power capitalism and the state has over us.

The coming together of exploitation and oppression can be clearly seen in the smallest of workplace actions. Should workers win a fight for increased wages their power to win better conditions improves and vice versa. When workers organise we challenge management's right to manage.

Simple trade union organisation around traditional bread and butter issues is not adequate to this task, as it is based on the acceptance of the capitalist class. As well as a structure of mass meetings and delegates there also needs to be a specifically anarcho-syndicalist presence in any workplace.

This will almost always involve only a minority of workers in the present time. The role of anarcho-syndicalist militants is not to control these workplace organisations but to take the initiative organising and argue for anarcho-syndicalist methods in workplace meetings, attempting to gain broad support for our aims and principles through propaganda work and demonstrating our methods' effectiveness in action.

## DETAILS OF THE STRATEGY

While the eventual aim of all SF members in all workplaces is building a revolutionary union branch in their workplace, the immediate concern of SF members in the workplace is to build militant, independent class struggle.

This means organising with and encouraging the militancy of others , and pushing for disputes to be directly controlled by those involved. We seek to build anarcho-syndicalism through practically demonstrating that our ideas work.

An anarcho-syndicalist (or revolutionary) union should not seek to be a simple substitute for TUC unions, but an entirely different form of organisation with distinct methods reflecting its distinct goals.

While seeking to attract as many workers as possible, the organisation must retain a clear revolutionary perspective, even where this will sacrifice growth. Whether the union is a tiny militant minority or develops to a mass scale, the basic principles of direct action and collectivising struggle remain the same. Branches of this union will be federated together through the Solidarity Federation.

In the immediate term, to ensure control of struggles remains in the hands of those involved, we argue for and where possible organise mass meetings. Mass meetings should be seen as an alternative structure to official union structures, which by their nature constrain militant action.

Decisions are made directly and collectively in these assemblies. The work of these assemblies in different workplaces, teams or departments should be co-ordinated by delegate councils, convened as necessary.

In the most militant workforces regular mass meetings will be held, and this is obviously the ideal we are aiming at. This may not be possible in other workplaces where it will only be possible to organise such meetings when a particular dispute arises.

Wherever there are at least two SF members in the same workplace, an SF workplace branch should be formed. The workplace branch is an extension of the Local and aims to give members a practical focus for carrying out organising work in their workplace. This should be seen as a springboard towards collective action and a foundational unit of the revolutionary union.

We need a three-pronged approach to the business of actually building anarcho-syndicalist structures, but the general principles of our industrial strategy apply to all three.

In a workplace with a recognised TUC union, an SF member would typically join the union but promote an anarcho-syndicalist strategy. This would involve organising workplace assemblies to make collective decisions on workplace issues. However, workers will still be likely to hold union cards here to avoid splits in the workplace between union members and non-union members. Members would also seek to build collective direct action beyond union structures, organise with other militants independently of the union and seek to build an organised anarcho-syndicalist presence on the shop floor.

In a non-unionised workplace, SF members should attempt to organise collectively



with workmates, and form committees of militant workers. The medium term aim should be to build from this into an SF workplace branch.

If the mood in the workplace moves towards unionisation with a recognised TUC union, members would typically join the union whilst continuing to argue for the importance of collective decision-making and direct action and pursuing the strategy for unionised workplaces. However, members would not silence their criticisms of trade unions.

In a non-unionised workplace that is difficult to organise due to a high turnover of staff or a large number of temps, we should just call workers assemblies when a dispute arises, while still attempting to network with other militants. Despite the difficulties, members would still attempt to build an SF workplace branch if circumstances allow for it.

In all three cases, members will seek to build groups of militant workers prepared to organise direct action – ‘workplace committees’ – which would organise independently in the workplace. Wherever there are multiple Solidarity Federation members in a workplace, they should immediately seek to form a workplace branch.

All members of Solidarity Federation aim to be directly networked with other workers in their industry by way of SF Industrial Networks. These networks should aid the development of SF workplace branches and help in spreading information and disputes beyond workplace boundaries.

Finally, nothing in this strategy precludes SF members from co-operation with other workers or workers’ groups as they see fit, so long as such activity does not contradict the aims and principles and constitution.

# COMMUNITY STRATEGY

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## GENERAL PRINCIPLES

The general aims of this strategy are:

- To advance working class struggle locally
- To promote a culture of resistance, confidence and self-reliance
- To support the defence of community resources
- To help promote class conscious community spirit based on solidarity and mutual aid

Our approach to community issues is not aimed at replicating the work of organisations such as the Citizens Advice Bureau, or indulging in NIMBYism with revolutionary politics tagged on. As well as supporting the efforts of residents to defend community resources and improve living standards locally, where appropriate we promote the ideas of working-class selforganisation and community self-management. Our ultimate goal is the self-emancipation of the working-class and the establishment of libertarian communism.

### **Direct action**

Direct action in the community can take diverse forms, from pickets, road blockages, and occupations of property to rent strikes, anti-bailiff mobilisations and mass non-payment of taxes. The hallmark of direct action is that it is action taken by the affected people themselves to directly achieve a goal without intermediaries.

### **Direct democracy and community control**

Direct democracy is an essential feature of how we organise. Mass meetings should be organised as needed to involve as many people as possible and ensure community control of the struggle. Instead of electing a central/steering committee to make decisions for us, we should make the decisions ourselves through a delegate council composed of mandated, recallable delegates from each campaign or organisation involved. This avoids any one group or prominent individuals imposing their will by dominating a steering committee or through caucusing. We will oppose the inclusion of politicians, bureaucrats and the police.

### **Officers**

In order to run an ongoing campaign, it will often be necessary to elect a secretary and treasurer for the delegate council. These roles should be administrative and unpaid, rather than paid, decision-making ones, and subject to immediate recall if it is felt

they are not fulfilling their mandates. There should be no standing chair, rather a chair should be elected or appointed at each meeting as required. This keeps control of the campaign with the mass of ordinary members, through their mandated delegates, and minimises the possibility of being controlled (or demobilised) from above.

Due to the diverse nature of community issues, these general principles should serve as a guide to action. But we can also specify some of the more common issues in which we get involved — it is by no means an exhaustive list.

### **Racism and anti-fascism**

Many towns and cities are afflicted by racial divisions which only benefit the ruling class and must be fought against. We therefore challenge racism, sectarianism and all reactionary attitudes by appealing to people on the basis of class unity. We also reject the state collaborationist strategy of groups such as Unite Against Fascism in favour of a class struggle approach to fighting the scourge of street-based racism and/or neo-fascism.

In general we will carry out anti-fascist activity with others through specifically class-struggle anti-fascist groups, rather than doing it under the Solidarity Federation banner. On the other hand, the long-term work of ‘filling the vacuum’ — organising around everyday community issues — is very much part of our role as a revolutionary union initiative.

### **Anti-social behaviour and violent crime**

We recognise that issues such as antisocial behaviour and violent crime have a destructive effect on the quality of life for many working-class people. We believe it is possible to tackle these issues without pandering to populist sentiment or criminalising young people, along the lines of the general principles set out in this strategy.

### **Landlords and employment agencies**

Deposit and wage theft are common problems, but agencies are vulnerable to direct action tactics such as pickets and occupations. SolFed Locals should take on this kind of dispute in line with the general principles set out here: not seeking to act as a service, but including the wronged individuals as active participants in direct action and seeking to build a wider culture of resistance.

### **Gentrification**

Gentrification is a complex process, which often involves pitting existing small businesses against incoming big ones. Whilst we do not wish to end up fighting for one set of capitalists over another, struggles over local developments are often flashpoints which bring people together. Gentrification is also harmful as it can often break up established working class communities. For example, the practice of building luxury flats, which cannot be afforded by members of the community, in order to “yupify” the area. This process not only prices out many poorer people in the community, but it is done without the consent of people in the area, which raises the issue of community control.



## Residents and tenants associations

We recognise that residents and tenants associations can play a positive role in local community life, but they are also at risk of being co-opted by the State. We are in favour of active participation in such groups that are independent of the local council and police, and also support the non-hierarchical federation of these associations as a step towards community self-management.